

# TRADITIONS

A PUBLICATION OF THE NRA FOUNDATION

## **BIG CHEESE PROGRAM VISIONARIES**

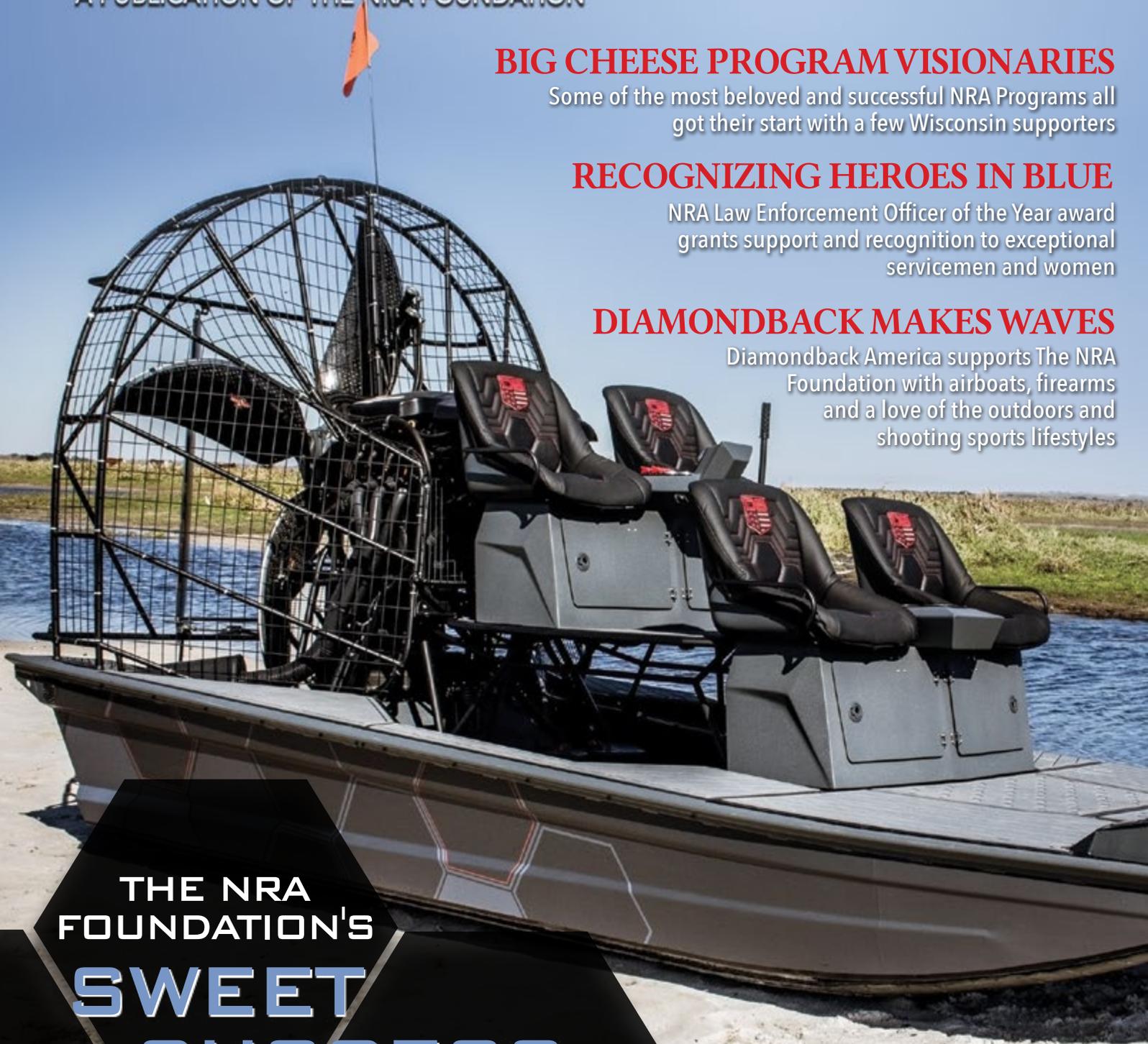
Some of the most beloved and successful NRA Programs all got their start with a few Wisconsin supporters

## **RECOGNIZING HEROES IN BLUE**

NRA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award grants support and recognition to exceptional servicemen and women

## **DIAMONDBACK MAKES WAVES**

Diamondback America supports The NRA Foundation with airboats, firearms and a love of the outdoors and shooting sports lifestyles



THE NRA  
FOUNDATION'S

**SWEET  
SUCCESS  
IN THE BIG PEACH**

# Features



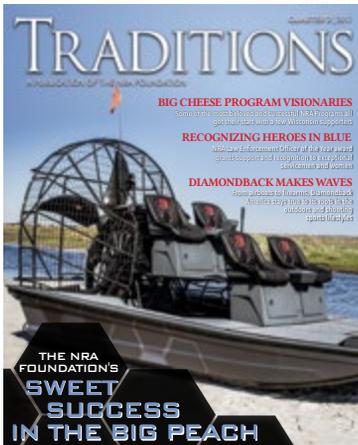
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## COVER STORY

### Sweet Success in the Big Peach

The NRA Foundation's events at the 2017 NRA Annual Meetings in Atlanta generate excitement and funding for the shooting sports!

## ON THE COVER



The NRA Diamondback Airboat was the Showcase Item up for auction on GunBroker.com for the 2017 NRA Annual Meetings & Exhibits in Atlanta.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

Established in 1990, The NRA Foundation, Inc. ("NRA Foundation") is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that raises tax-deductible contributions in support of a wide range of firearms-related public interest activities of the National Rifle Association of America and other organizations that defend and foster the Second Amendment rights of all law-abiding Americans. These activities are designed to promote firearms and hunting safety, to enhance marksmanship skills of those participating in the shooting sports, and to educate the general public about firearms in their historic, technological, and artistic context. Funds granted by The NRA Foundation benefit a variety of constituencies throughout the United States, including children, youth, women, individuals with physical disabilities, gun collectors, law enforcement officers, hunters, and competitive shooters.

# Protecting Freedom's Future

Grassroots efforts and educational programs preserve our traditions

## Richard Childress

*NRA First Vice President and  
NRA Foundation Board Trustee*

At the 2017 Annual Meetings and Exhibits in Atlanta, I witnessed the record-breaking crowd of attendees who gathered to experience the programs, industry supporters and community of Second Amendment enthusiasts that make the National Rifle Association what it is today. By kicking off the weekend's series of events with a focus on preserving our shooting sports traditions and teaching freedom through education, training and public service programs, the National NRA Foundation Banquet set the tone for another positive and passionate Annual Meeting that I was excited to be a part of.

NRA programs play a critical role in ensuring the future of the Second Amendment, and NRA Foundation grant funding supports them on local and national levels. Through those programs and grants we are able to reach millions of people with firearms education and training and to create lifelong supporters of the freedoms and traditions we cherish.

As *Friends of NRA* celebrates 25 years of fundraising this year, I continue to be impressed by the level of support for programs and organizations that promote the shooting sports that it has made possible. The NRA Foundation has awarded more than 42,000 grants with the help of more than \$743 million raised by *Friends of NRA* since its inception.

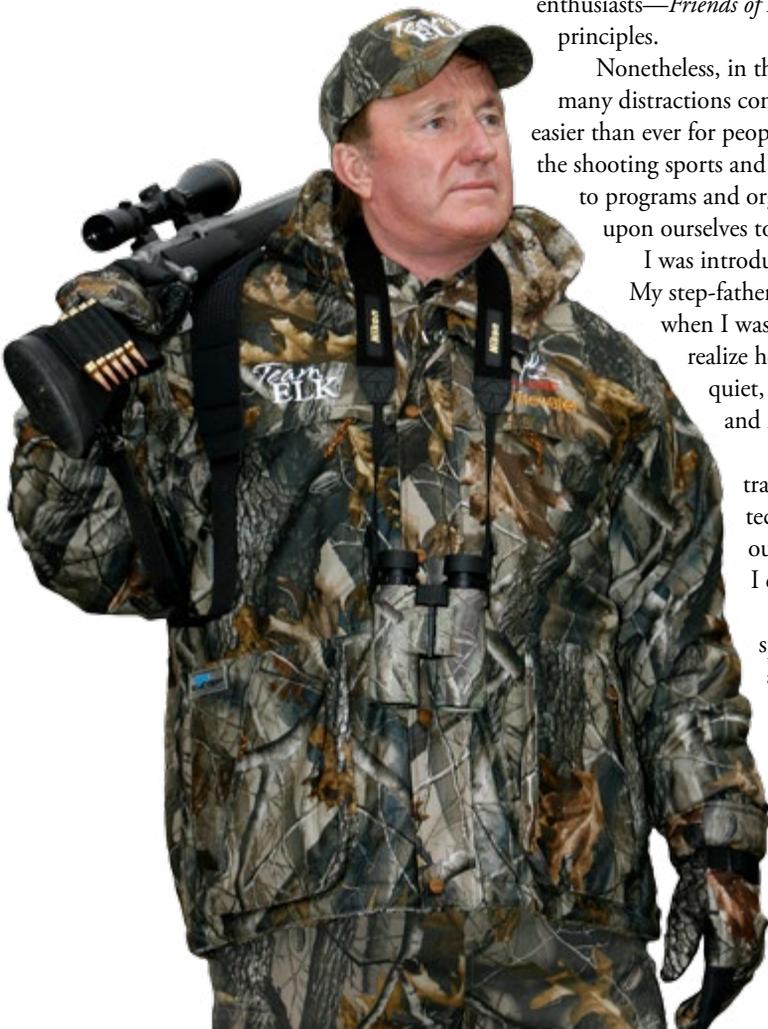
At the many *Friends of NRA* events that I've attended, including the one held each year at our banquet hall at Richard Childress Racing, it is especially rewarding to meet the young people who have been impacted by NRA Foundation supported programs. And it is grassroots events like these that are critical to reaching our current and potential Second Amendment supporters. As a sportsman, I am always looking for ways to recruit, retain and reactivate other shooting sports enthusiasts—*Friends of NRA* and The NRA Foundation are key contributors to those three principles.

Nonetheless, in the next 25 years we're going to have to work even harder. With so many distractions competing for our time and attention in today's modern world, it's easier than ever for people to fall into complacency or disinterest in pursuing and protecting the shooting sports and outdoors lifestyles. We'll need to continue increasing grant funding to programs and organizations that encourage people to get active, along with taking it upon ourselves to pass along our passion and experience.

I was introduced to hunting, fishing and the great outdoors at a very young age. My step-father used to take me hunting in the woods of Winston-Salem, N.C., when I was a boy—sometimes we'd spend all day squirrel hunting. I've come to realize how being a sportsman taught me invaluable life lessons: sit still, be quiet, be patient, and respect your surroundings, along with safety, ethics and marksmanship.

Today, I'm focused on imparting our hunting heritage, outdoor traditions and American freedoms to our next generation and to protecting our Second Amendment through grassroots efforts, policy and outreach. I want our grandchildren to have the same opportunities that I did when I was a child. The best way to ensure that is to be a mentor.

Take someone out into the woods to hunt. Take someone out sport shooting for the first time. Let them experience that thrill, and I promise you they'll be hooked. We need more opportunities for people to take aim. And that's where The NRA Foundation and *Friends of NRA* come in—to support, fund and maintain the programs, places and people who provide those opportunities to Americans of all ages and all levels of familiarity with firearms and the shooting sports. With your continued support, The NRA Foundation will carry on this mission to protect freedom's future for generations to come.



# SHOOTING STRAIGHT

**Q.** How did you get involved in shooting and at what age?

**A.** I started dove hunting with my folks in Yuma, Ariz., at a very young age. When I was 10 years old I enrolled in an NRA Junior Rifle program shooting .22 rifle at the San Gabriel Valley Gun Club. They also had a program one Saturday each month for kids to shoot skeet for free. Once I got introduced to the moving targets I really started to excel, and that motivated me to begin shooting competitive skeet.

**Q.** What does being a female athlete and making Olympic history mean to you and how has it influenced your life?

**A.** One of the great things about shooting is that your size, your stature don't matter—everyone is on a level playing field. When I started shooting there were not many women, but now there are whole squads of women and there has really been a push in the industry to get more women involved. I'm excited to see how we now have companies offering women's clothing and apparel, guns for women and events for whole families.

**Q.** Friends of NRA is celebrating 25 years of fundraising in 2017. How have that program and NRA Foundation grants impacted you?

**A.** I got my start in that NRA Junior Rifle program. Additionally, without the NRA and The NRA Foundation's efforts to promote the shooting sports, we wouldn't have as many women and kids participating in them today. I see the results of The NRA Foundation's work every day.

**Q.** Looking ahead, where do you see the future of the shooting sports?

**A.** Looking to the future I think we have many challenges and hurdles to face, but shooting is a part of our heritage that should and can be passed on from generation to generation. It is a cherished tradition in the United States.

**Q.** What is your favorite type of gun to shoot?

**A.** My favorite gun to shoot in competition is an over/under shotgun. I practice between 500 and 1,000 rounds a day, and the over/under has the best reliability.

**Q.** What hobbies do you have outside of shooting?

**A.** I restore antique cars—Ford Model A's and Model T's. I also collect first edition children's books, and I love to cook!

**Q.** What is on your bucket list that you have yet to tackle?

**A.** I haven't been bungee jumping yet!

**Q.** Out of all your life accomplishments, which stands out to you the most?

**A.** My son is my greatest accomplishment. He just turned four, and I am so proud of him. I am looking forward to sharing my love of shooting and the outdoors with him.

**Q.** If you could meet anyone in the world, past or present, who would it be and what would you ask them?

**A.** I recently have been researching my family history and building my family tree. During this process I have found many interesting people, but if I had to pick one it would be my second great grandfather George Gottlieb Rhode. At the age of 19 he enlisted in the U.S. Cavalry. He was in the 1873 Yellowstone expedition, the 1874 Red Cloud expedition, 1875 Black Hills expedition, and the 1876 great battle against Sitting Bull. A week before the Custer massacre, he was one of 25 men hand-picked from the Second Cavalry under Lt. Sibly to try to save General Custer at the battle of Little Big Horn. He later became a judge, ran for state senate, and owned a hotel (the Ranchman's Hotel) and saloon owner. I'm fascinated by my ancestry and would have tons of questions for him.

**Q.** What is your favorite quote and why?

**A.** "Our Olympic Medals are like a pie and many people have a slice." I love this quote because it reminds people that we don't get there on our own. It takes a lot of support from a lot of people to achieve your dream, whatever it may be.

Photo credit Sena Zimmer Photography

# Q&A with Double Trap and Skeet Olympic medalist **Kim Rhode**



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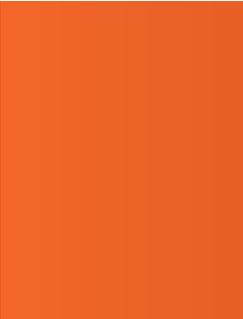
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# SWEET SUCCESS IN THE BIG PEACH

By NRABlog Staff  
with Megan McConnell



The evening of April 27 was a lively and exciting time for Second Amendment supporters. Nearly 1,500 patriots gathered at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Ga., for a night of fun, food, firearms and fellowship at the National NRA Foundation Banquet sponsored by Century Arms, Henry Repeating Arms and Kimber.

For 25 years, *Friends of NRA* has raised money for the future of the shooting sports at local events across the country. That same enthusiasm from the local level is experienced at The NRA Foundation's largest event of the year at the NRA Annual Meetings & Exhibits.

As the crowd gathered outside the doors of the banquet hall in anticipation of the 5 p.m. opening, they were welcomed with a new addition to the annual event's lineup of entertainment and fundraising opportunities. Four games in the pre-function area gave attendees the chance to get the fun started early: the Ammo Box game with multiple chances to win, the Fire & Ice game with the prize option of a firearm or a Yeti cooler, the Gaston J. Glock Style LP game that included a Gaston J. Glock Style LP range bag trolley with ticket purchase, and the Winchester Ammo game.

Attention shifted when the doors opened, and the crowd flooded the main room where they had the opportunity to play more games sponsored by some of the largest firearms manufacturers in the country: Century Arms, Colt Manufacturing, Kimber, Smith & Wesson, Taurus and Weatherby.

Attendees could also bid in the silent auction as well as view a selection of featured items reserved for live auction which included firearms, merchandise, gear, hunting trips and much more.

As the last tickets were dropped in buckets and the final bid was placed in the silent auction, attendees took to their seats where they were greeted with special remarks from Wayne LaPierre, Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association, and Allan Cors, President of the National Rifle Association, followed by representatives from event sponsors Century Arms, Henry Repeating Arms and Kimber.

Each speaker mirrored similar sentiments to the crowd, touching on the importance of The NRA Foundation, its purpose, and the dedicated individuals who help make it all possible.

Not only do *Friends of NRA* volunteers help the National NRA Foundation Banquet run smoothly—the entire evening would not have been possible without the hard work of volunteers—but they also provide the backbone to 1,100 local *Friends of NRA* events held across the country each year. NRA Director of Volunteer Fundraising Sarah Engeset, Director of Field Staff Philip Gray, and Redpoint Resolutions Vice President Tom Bochnowski—representing the 2016 Volunteer of the Year program sponsor, Ripcord—took a moment to honor the 2016 Region Volunteers of the Year and Committee of the Year. Learn more about the program and the 2016 honorees on page 10.



## EVENT SPONSORS



**CENTURY  
ARMS**



**HENRY**  
Made in America, Or Not Made At All

*Kimber*

**PHOTOS Credit Forrest MacCormack and Jesse Snyder.** Opposite page: Attendees of all ages enjoyed the chance to explore the banquet's exciting array of firearms and merchandise. This page, from top: Brother and sister duo James and Julia Shealy sing the National Anthem as the Lee County High School Navy JROTC Color Guard presents the colors; Two attendees check out the custom 2017 NRA Annual Meeting LCW15 before the live auction.



One of the most memorable moments of the evening was when Anthony Imperato, President of Henry Repeating Arms, took to the stage to honor four individuals who have gone above and beyond the call of duty. One by one, Anthony shared stories of veterans of the armed forces and invited them on stage to thank them for their service and present them with their own Henry commemorative rifles.

The presentation honored 39-year USAF veteran Linda Becker, Medal of Honor recipient and Afghanistan veteran Ty Carter, Medal of Honor recipient and veteran of Vietnam War Don Jenkins, and WWII veteran George Krakosy.

Then the hour arrived for the live auction festivities to take place and bidders focused their attention to the stage as the auctioneer greeted the spirited crowd.

One item after another was quickly picked up. From the 200th Anniversary Remington Model 870 and Custom Remington R1 to the Weatherby MARK V® LAZERMARK®, Wooden Gadsden Flag donated by Flags of Valor, NRA Originals Bar Stools set donated by Jesse James and more, the live auction proved to be the highlight event of the evening. The Colt Single Action Army Revolver Prototype proved the most popular firearm with the crowd, earning a final bid of \$16,000.

The National NRA Foundation Banquet truly was an evening of fun, food, firearms, and fellowship from start to finish. Knowing that contributions will help support local, state and national shooting sports programs for years to come made it all the more enjoyable for those attending and running the event.

And that excitement and motivation did not end on Thursday night. Friday morning The NRA Foundation continued giving away firearms and raising money as NRA supporters from across the nation came to play the renowned and annually-anticipated Wall of Guns. Thanks to sponsors Century Arms, Henry Repeating Arms, Kel-Tec and Kimber, and to a team of extremely dedicated volunteers and NRA staff sporting eye-catching Gaston J. Glock Style LP performance shooting shirts, the 2017 Wall of Guns made lucky winners out of more than 100 enthusiastic attendees.





The wall was packed with more than 70 firearms of various makes, models and calibers—many of them generously donated by Benelli, Century Arms, Diamondback, EAA Corp, FMK, Henry Repeating Arms, IWI, Kahr Arms, Kel-Tec, North American Arms, Remington, Ruger, Savage Arms, Seekins Precision, Smith & Wesson, Stag Arms, Taurus, TriStar and Walther. For \$20 participants had the opportunity to win their choice of one firearm off of the “pick one” side or two firearms off of the “pick two” side. Each round of the Wall of Guns consisted of 100 tickets each sold for a 1 in 100 chance to win. This year’s most popular firearms included the Ruger 10/22 Takedown, Seekins Precision SPX 6.5 Creedmore, Ruger Precision Rifle, Daniel Defense DDM4V11 and Kimber Micro Carry.

The Draw of the Century raffle sponsored by Century Arms allowed even more people to win a new firearm. After every 10 rounds of the Wall of Guns, a winner was chosen for the Draw of the Century. Throughout the weekend four Draw of the Century winners were able to choose one Century firearm off of the wall.

The weekend’s fundraising festivities concluded with the closing of the Diamondback NRA Airboat auction on GunBroker.com. The one-of-a-kind airboat featured many custom details like NRA wraps, Rhino non-skid hull interiors, custom powdercoat color and more. It even came with a trailer with easy load ramps and custom XD wheels. Anthony Brewer of Greystone Marketing in Orlando, Fla., won the auction with a bid of \$58,000, and he plans to continue helping The NRA Foundation fundraise for the shooting sports by donating use of the airboat for a big gator hunt to be auctioned next year.

The NRA Foundation will be back in action next year in Dallas. The 2018 National NRA Foundation Banquet will be held on Thursday, May 3, and the Wall of Guns will return May 4-6. Buy your banquet tickets early, because 2018 is bound to sellout! ■

*Join us at the 2018 NRA Annual Meetings & Exhibits in Dallas, May 4-6! Visit [www.friendsofnra.org/NationalEvents](http://www.friendsofnra.org/NationalEvents) to learn more about the event. If you are interested in being a sponsor or donating to the 2018 National NRA Foundation Banquet or Wall of Guns, please contact Megan McConnell at [nraevents@nrahq.org](mailto:nraevents@nrahq.org).*



**PHOTOS Credit Peter Fountain, Jesse Snyder and Kristina Krawchuk.** Opposite page, clockwise from top: An attendee raises a hand to bid in the live auction; A patriotic attendee carries his Ammo Box from the pre-function game and places a bid in the silent auction; Diamondback NRA Airboat auction winner Anthony Brewer grabbed his crew, including his son and nephew, for a photo op with his new boat that they are planning to take on many adventures in the swampy Floridian waters. This page, from top: From left to right, President of Henry Repeating Arms Anthony Imperato, Don Jenkins, George Krakosy, Ty Carter and Linda Becker gather with the commemorative rifles presented to honor the servicemembers; An NRA Annual Meeting attendee stops to browse the Wall of Guns; The Wall of Guns drew the attention of the crowd in the Georgia World Congress Center.





# CELEBRATING THE FINEST FACES OF FRIENDS

By Abigail Klein

Event Marketing & Communications Coordinator, National Rifle Association

**W**ho are the *Friends of NRA*? They are the more than 15,000 volunteers across the country who dedicate their time, energy and passion to ensuring that shooting sports traditions get passed down to the next generation and that anyone who wants to learn about the shooting sports will have the opportunity to do so. The *Friends of NRA* program would not exist if not for the amazing effort that all of these volunteers put into making their events successful.

These men and women spend countless hours planning events, asking for donations, selling raffle tickets, advertising, and helping local clubs apply for grant funds. They coach school trap teams, 4-H shooting clubs and archery teams, volunteer with conservation clubs, assist with training seminars, and do so much more for their communities. With their variety of other commitments and backgrounds, all of these individuals come together to support The NRA Foundation.

Every year, each of the NRA Field Representatives from across the nation honor a volunteer for their outstanding work by naming them Area Volunteer of the Year. From that group, one person from each region is then selected as the Regional Volunteer of the Year for going the extra mile to support *Friends of NRA*. These six volunteers were brought to the 2017 Annual Meetings & Exhibits, where they were honored for all of their diligence and dedication at the National Foundation Banquet. Thank you to the 2016 Volunteer of the Year Sponsor RIPCORN for making this trip possible for our amazing volunteers.

The 2016 Regional Volunteers of the Year, combined, have close to 45 years of volunteering experience, and they raised nearly

\$300,000 last year alone. Congratulations to James Hemmer of Upper New York, Kenny Ruckel of Kentucky, Marcia Parsons of Alabama, Ray Hollingsworth of East Texas, Greg Collins of Southern Alaska, and Rodney Wilkes of Northern California, who were chosen as the Eastern, Central, Southern, South Central, Western, and Southwest Region Volunteers of the Year. Each of these individuals has found intriguing ways to build their events, inspire community involvement and become the faces of *Friends of NRA*.

James came up with the idea of hosting a sightseeing trip to Washington, D.C., which proved to be not only a lot of fun but also a very successful fundraiser. Kenny has been a driving force in the establishment of a local gun club and range, and he assisted them in their application for an NRA Public Range Grant which awarded more than \$13,000 for the second phase of construction. Marcia serves as treasurer on her committee, and she not only keeps accurate books but also plays an instrumental role in selling tables for their event—when one event sold out three months ahead of time, she even creatively came up with an auxiliary room at the venue.

Ray makes sure to take the time to go into the community, working several gun shows, helping clubs with grant applications and creating more awareness of the program. Greg pioneered a new fundraising event called Date Night Wall of Guns, which has proven to be a huge success. Rodney assists at multiple events each year and is always willing to offer the use of his FFL to support any committee in need. Congratulations again to our Regional Volunteers of the Year, and an enormous thank you to all of the volunteers who are the faces of *Friends* throughout the country!

# 2016 VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

## EASTERN REGION

**Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York (Lower) and Rhode Island:** David Peabody, Central Massachusetts  
**Delaware and Pennsylvania (Eastern):** Harold Bowman, Swatara Valley  
**Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont:** Charles Hedrick, Greater Androscoggin  
**New York (Upper):** James Hemmer, Sullivan County  
**Ohio (Northern):** Ron Salkovick, Mid-Ohio  
**Ohio (Southern):** Pam DeLille, Central Ohio  
**Pennsylvania (Western):** Dale Emerick, PA's 1st  
**Virginia (Eastern), Maryland (Eastern), and Washington, D.C.:** Matthew Bergstrom, National Capital  
**West Virginia, Maryland (Western), and Virginia (Western):** Michael Montgomery, Rockbridge

## CENTRAL REGION

**Illinois (Northern):** Jack Miller, Kankakee River  
**Illinois (Southern):** Veron Auld, Perry Randolph  
**Indiana:** Joe Fackler, Falls of the Ohio  
**Iowa:** Rosea Hamelua, Central Iowa  
**Kentucky:** Kenny Ruckel, Lewis County  
**Michigan:** Brian Henry, Eastern Upper Peninsula  
**Missouri (Northern):** Raymond Sweet, Northeast Missouri  
**Missouri (Southern):** Gary Kamp, Cape Area  
**Nebraska:** Mark Beacom, Eastern Nebraska  
**Wisconsin:** Brian Mrnak, Chequamegon Bay Area

## SOUTHWEST REGION

**Arizona:** Randy Graf, Santa Cruz Valley  
**California (Central):** Gary & Coleen Morris, Central State  
**California (Eastern):** Scott Sorenson, Yuba/Sutter  
**California (Mid):** Sean Ford, Clovis  
**California (North):** Rodney Wilkes, Napa County  
**California (Southern):** Scott & Ramona Lee, North County  
**Nevada:** John Madden, Carson City

## SOUTHERN REGION

**Alabama:** Marcia Parsons, Huntsville  
**Florida (Northern):** Laura Watson, First Coast  
**Florida (Southern):** Gary & Pat Graef, Greater Fort Myers  
**Georgia:** Don Simpson, Allatoona  
**Louisiana:** Tim Leger, Ark-La-Tax  
**Mississippi:** Bill Militor, Central Mississippi  
**North Carolina (Eastern):** Ray Campbell, Wilmington  
**North Carolina (Western):** Jeff Lassiter, Montgomery County  
**Tennessee:** Joe Todd, Stones River

## WESTERN REGION

**Alaska (Northern):** Trevor Burgess, Fairbanks  
**Alaska (Southern):** Greg Collins, Homer  
**Hawaii and Oregon:** Katie Jones, Douglas County  
**Idaho:** Kenny Riedlinger, Mini Cassia  
**North Dakota:** Jesse Flath, Sakakawea  
**Minnesota:** Dan Porter, Kanabec Area  
**Montana:** Janice & Wendell Howser, Seeley Lake  
**South Dakota:** Will McCall, Mid-Dakota  
**Washington:** Brian Huss, Kittitas County  
**Wyoming:** Mark Carrico, Great Divide

## SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

**Arkansas:** Michael Whitkanack, Johnson County  
**Colorado:** Carol Young, Ark Valley  
**Kansas:** Dixie Cravens, Capital City  
**New Mexico:** Kent Terry, Quay County  
**Oklahoma:** Keith Compton, McCurtain County  
**Texas (Northern):** Ray Hollingsworth, Northeast Texas  
**Texas (Southern):** Chris Lyons, Southeast Texas  
**Texas (West):** Dennis Candler, Permian Basin

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**RIPCORD**

**PHOTO** by Peter Fountain. From left: NRA Director of Field Staff Philip Gray, Redpoint Resolutions Vice President Tom Bochnowski, Western Region Director Brad Kruger, Greg Collins, Southwest Region Director Jason Quick, Cody and Rodney Wilkes, Southern Region Director Al Hammond, Marcia Parsons, Ray Hollingsworth, South Central Region Director Tom Ulik, Kenny Ruckel, Central Region Director Chad Franklin, James Hemmer, Eastern Region Director Bryan Hoover, and NRA Director of Volunteer Fundraising Sarah Engeset.



# Officer of the Year

Award Honors Acts of Heroism and Service

By Christina Paladeau

*Event Marketing & Communications Coordinator, National Rifle Association*

Each year, the NRA recognizes an exceptional act or service by a law enforcement officer by presenting the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award.

Administered by the NRA Law Enforcement Division and supported by NRA Foundation grant funding, the program is an opportunity to honor those who serve the communities of America with bravery and dedication.

This year's recipient took heroic actions under the most stressful and confusing circumstances while off duty to end a crazed knifeman's melee, saving lives and stopping the severe injury of countless innocent people.

On September 17, 2016, Jason Falconer was shopping for his son's birthday present at the Crossroads Center mall in St. Cloud, Minn. A part-time officer with the Avon Police Department and former police chief in Albany, Minn., he didn't imagine that his law enforcement training or experience as a 3-Gun competitor, USPSA shooter and NRA Certified Instructor would be put to life-saving use that evening as he shopped off-duty in plain clothes.

Unbeknownst to Officer Falconer, a man had started a stabbing spree outside the mall and continued his attack inside, stabbing 10 shoppers and punching many others in the head, back, neck and face. Falconer's attention was drawn to two loud, sharp noises and he saw some shoppers running and screaming. An individual dressed in a security uniform then walked up to him and asked him if he was Muslim.

Officer Falconer answered "no," and as the individual turned, Falconer could see that he had a large knife in each hand.

Without hesitation for his personal safety, Officer Falconer immediately drew his concealed off-duty handgun, announced he was a police officer, and ordered him to drop the knives. But the knifeman just turned and ran through the mall and into a crowded major department store with Falconer in pursuit.

The man abruptly turned, stopped, and laid down as instructed by Officer Falconer, but he still didn't drop the knives. Just as abruptly, the knifeman jumped back up and charged Falconer with the knives.

Coming under immediate attack, Falconer fired his off-duty handgun several times at the suspect while backing up to create distance between them. The knifeman fell, but he still held onto the knives. Witnesses confirm that Officer Falconer continued to issue commands to the attacker to stay down and drop the knives, identifying himself as an off-duty officer verbally and by displaying his police badge while he kept the knifeman covered at gunpoint.

**PHOTO** by NRA Staff. Officer Falconer and his wife Beth are joined by NRA Executive Vice President and CEO Wayne LaPierre and NRA-ILA Executive Director Chris Cox at the NRA Board of Directors presentation of the 2016 NRA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award.

Just as the incident seemed to be over, the knifeman suddenly got up and began moving between clothing racks, circling as Officer Falconer continued to order him to drop the knives and get down. Instead, the suspect charged, with Officer Falconer firing additional rounds at him head-on.

After several more hits, the knifeman fell to the floor on his stomach, only to continue his assault from his hands and knees, crawling towards Officer Falconer with knives still in hand. He finally collapsed completely, and Officer Falconer moved to a position to block him from the open area of the mall until responding police arrived.

To recognize Officer Jason Falconer for his valor, heroism and quick, life-saving actions, the National Rifle Association named him the 2016 National Rifle Association Law Enforcement Officer of the Year and presented the award to Falconer at the NRA Board of Directors Meeting during the 2017 NRA Annual Meetings and Exhibits in Atlanta in April.

“I join the 5 million members of the National Rifle Association in honoring Officer Falconer,” said NRA President Allan D. Cors. “Officer Falconer is the ultimate example of a law enforcement professional and responsibly armed citizen exercising his Second Amendment rights to not only defend himself, but to protect those around him from harm.”

“The NRA has been a longtime supporter

of our nation’s law enforcement officers,” notes NRA Director of Law Enforcement Glen Hoyer. “The NRA formed the Law Enforcement Division almost 60 years ago to work directly with law enforcement officers and agencies in firearms training, competitions and in any other way we can assist. The NRA Board of Directors realized the need to seek out and recognize individual officers for their outstanding achievements, and the NRA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year program was born. As a retired law enforcement officer I am proud not only to be a supporter of the NRA, but also to serve as their Law Enforcement Division Director.”

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award was first established in 1993, thanks to a \$5,000 donation offered to The NRA Foundation with the intention of funding an award to a Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. The proposal received unanimous support by the NRA Board of Directors Law Enforcement Assistance

Committee, which worked throughout the following months to establish the criteria for this new ‘NRA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year’ award.

Like the 23 other officers who have been recognized since 1993, Officer Falconer’s actions are a credit to himself, his department, and the community he serves and are in keeping with the highest traditions of law enforcement.

“It was a great honor to be recognized by the NRA as their Law Enforcement Officer of the Year,” Falconer shares. “I do believe that the actions I took September 17, 2016,

are consistent with the actions that any law enforcement professional would have taken if found in the same set of circumstances I found myself in that evening.”

Falconer, who owns a firing range and firearms training facility in Waite Park, Minn., uses the experience of September 17 as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of training and preparedness. “As an NRA firearms instructor, a significant portion of the training that I provide

is centered on situational awareness and judgment for critical incidents,” he says. “We want our students to recognize a threat and remove themselves from the situation if at all possible. But if they have to use deadly force, they have the mindset to be a victor and not a victim to this violent attack.”

*Do you know someone who deserves the Officer of the Year award? For eligibility information, award categories, and complete information, go to [awards.nra.org/awards/nra-officer-of-the-year-award](http://awards.nra.org/awards/nra-officer-of-the-year-award). Apply for a grant for your educational shooting sports program at [nrafoundation.org!](http://nrafoundation.org!)*

“*The NRA Board of Directors realized the need to seek out and recognize individual officers for their outstanding achievements, and the NRA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year program was born.*”



”

# BIG CHEESE VISIONARIES

By Kristina Krawchuk  
with Diane Danielson & Scott Taetsch

America's dairy land isn't just known for its cheeseheads or National Mustard Museum (yes, there really is one). Wisconsin is also the birthplace of three widely-popular national NRA programs. Concerned with what their children were learning—and not learning—in school, Scott and Dede Taetsch, Don and Cindy Fortmann, Carl Miller and John Moosreiner decided to roll up their sleeves and do something about it.

Having already organized some opportunities to spread education and involvement in the shooting sports, the team formed Heritage Shooting Inc. in 1995. The 501(c)(3) organization has a three-pronged mission: to foster and promote the shooting sports through educating the public, especially the youth; to promote hunter safety and ethics; and to foster and encourage the rights of American citizens to own and bear arms as provided by the U.S. Constitution.

Add a few more passionate volunteers like Diane Danielson into the mix, and you've got curds of local ideas that slowly aged into mature and beloved programs that spread across the country like the smell of a sharp cheddar. Take a bite out of these three special programs ...



**NOW:** Brownells / NRA Day  
**THEN:** Youth Outdoor Sportsfest /  
Shooting Sports Camp  
**VISIONARY:** Scott Taetsch

“The first youth event we coordinated was called the Youth Outdoor Fest. It was designed as a recreational, non-competitive event to introduce youths under the age of 18 to the shooting sports. It was a changing world and we noticed a shift in how kids were using their spare time. Young people were getting fewer chances to experience some of the shooting and outdoor activities we take for granted. Shooting gives them the opportunity to connect with

other kids in an exciting and challenging sport that they can enjoy for decades and hopefully share with their family. It teaches responsibility and self-discipline while developing concentration skills and building self-esteem—plus, it's a lot of fun. We also realized that shooting doesn't place emphasis on strength, endurance, speed, or gender, so both boys and girls of all sizes, ages and physical abilities could participate equally. In the early years the program was limited to two-day weekends hosting 40 kids per day, ensuring that all shooting line instruction and supervision was one-on-one. In 1994, the National Rifle Association picked it up and ran it as an NRA Shooting Sports Camp program, which was later renamed NRA Youth Sportsfest. This single program has now impacted tens of thousands of boys and girls nationwide and continues to do so as Brownells / NRA Day. ”



**NOW: Women On Target®**

**THEN: NRA Shooting Sports Camp for Women**

**VISIONARY: Diane Danielson**

“ In 1998, I was the secretary of the Women’s Hunting and Sporting Association in Waukesha, Wis. Many of us were avid hunters and active competitors, but we really didn’t have a way to share our knowledge with other ladies who wanted to join the club. I met Scott and Dede Taetsch at the local *Friends of NRA* event, and Scott was a very active volunteer at the time. Women’s Hunting and Sporting Association wanted a women-only training opportunity, and Scott and I discussed the options at great length. We agreed we should try to run an event as a “specialty camp” under the NRA Shooting Sports Camp program. In 1999, NRA began a women-only concept and by 2000 the Women’s Program Department decided to provide grant funded material to the ladies. The theme for materials at that time revolved around an old picture representing Annie Oakley. When I came on board in 2010, the materials were updated and we stuck with just the distinctive logo for the Women On Target® Instructional Shooting Clinics. In 2000 we held 13 events attended by 496 ladies. Now, most of the original clinic directors have trained their replacements and a new generation of volunteers has taken over. We now hold around 450 events in 46 states with more than 10,000 attendees reported.

**NOW: Armed Forces Camp**

**THEN: Poolee Project / U.S. Armed Forces Pre-Basic Service Rifle Shooting Fundamentals Camp**

**VISIONARY: Scott Taetsch**

“ It started out as a trial run in 2004. USMC Master Gunnery Sergeant Mike Krueger and I both had kids going into the Marines, and we were very concerned. Many of these young recruits get into bootcamp and they are expected to know how to use a rifle when they’ve never shot a gun before. So our idea was to offer a program to introduce young Poolees to the fundamentals of rifle marksmanship and help ease some of that pressure. We had kids signing up that were absolutely terrified of holding a rifle. Bringing in a top league of experts helped them face their fear. NRA-certified instructors plus a host of Marines created a program for young Marines run by trained Marines. The camp includes classroom instruction on firearm safety, sight alignment, trigger control and basic operation of the M16A2 rifle—which they will use often throughout their military career. Additional activities include physical conditioning, strength challenges, camouflage face painting and those yummy MRE’s (Meals Ready to Eat). It’s a really smart concept. Our first trial run pulled in 165 Poolees. By 2008, more than 1,600 marine recruits had participated. Since inception, more than 5,500 recruits have completed the U.S. Armed Forces Camp and 75 volunteer coaches make up the support team. “The Few, The Proud” is an understatement—an estimated one in five re-



I’ve been involved with the NRA since I took my first Basic course in 1967—my mother was one of the instructors. I was the Women’s Program Coordinator for Wisconsin for 12 years in addition to volunteering on our local *Friends of NRA* committee and helping at the Heritage Youth, Women’s and Hunter Safety classes. To be able to say that my brainchild has become a national program is a bonus. It’s one off the bucket list to get to come to NRA headquarters each day as the NRA Women’s Program Coordinator and continue to run and grow the program that started out as my baby. ”



cruits will not become a marine. That number is changing because of these camps. The 9th Marine Corps District told us that in 2011, only one recruit of the first 2,800 attendees failed to qualify, which is an astounding accomplishment. None of this could be possible without our fundraising efforts. The NRA Foundation has granted more than \$22,000 towards the program through money raised by the *Friends of NRA* team. The program is now housed under Brownells / NRA Day.

It has been an honor and a privilege working with all the volunteers who make these programs happen. They are the heroes. Whether it’s raising money for our committee or committing their time and talent to push these programs forward, their support is remarkable. I jumped from a *Friends of NRA* volunteer and NRA Training Counselor into the role of Wisconsin Field Representative in 2004, and I am blessed to have such dedicated teams statewide. And it’s a real heart-warmer to see local programs we started in our tiny little area become the big national cheese! ”

# SNAP



Lee County High School Navy JROTC Color Guard from Leesburg, GA, presents the colors during the National Anthem



A Wall of Guns winner shows his winning raffle ticket to claim the firearm of his choice off the wall



Volunteers helped run the many games sponsored by major firearms manufacturers, including Smith & Wesson



The banquet dinner at the Thomas Murphy Congress Center



Laila, daughter of Century Arms Owner Michael Sucher, helps Brad Kruger draw winners



Miranda Carlson from Huntin' Buddies raffle sales team helps display items offered on the Live Auction



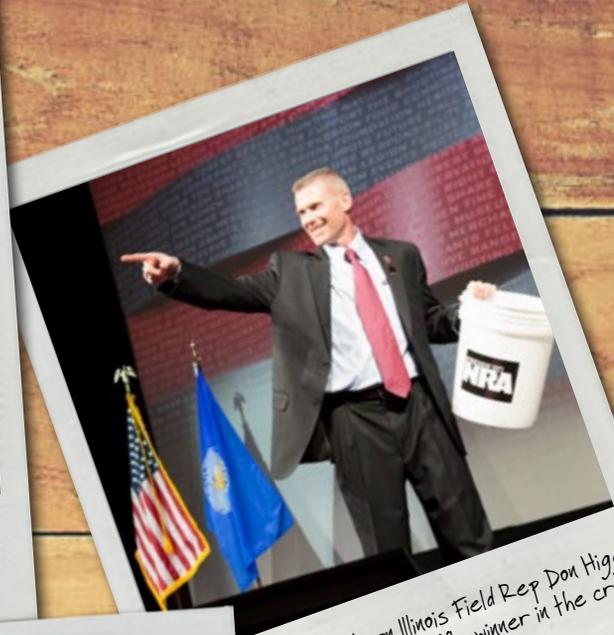
Louisiana Field Rep Chad Bowen high fives a young shooting sports enthusiast as he emcee's at the Wall of Guns that ran throughout the weekend



Jesse James, Firearms Unlimited owner and West Coast Choppers founder, donated an NRA Originals Bar Stools Set to the banquet auction



Draw an enthusiastic crowd to the Ballroom at the Georgia World Center Building B on Thursday, April 27



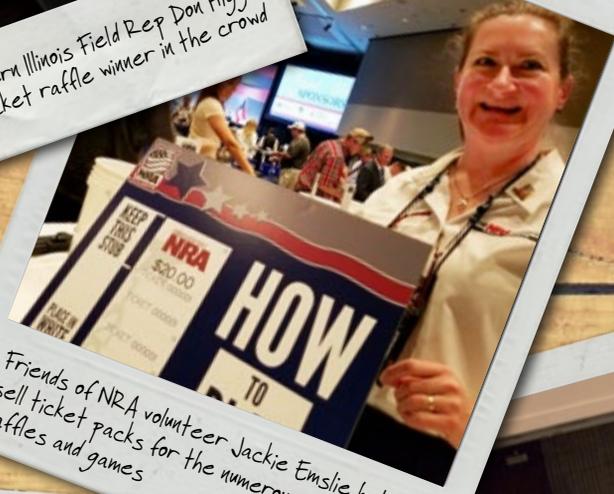
Southern Illinois Field Rep Don Higgs finds a bucket raffle winner in the crowd



Fellow Second Amendment supporters had the chance to socialize



WWI veteran George Krakosy received a commemorative rifle presented by Henry Repeating Arms President Anthony Imperato in thanks for his service



Friends of NRA volunteer Jackie Emslie helps sell ticket packs for the numerous raffles and games



Attendees celebrate their winning bid on one of the many unique items in the Live Auction

**25**  
1992 Years 2017  
**A LOOK AT THE NATIONAL NRA FOUNDATION BANQUET AT THE 2017 NRA ANNUAL MEETINGS IN APRIL**

Submit your Friends of NRA and NRA Foundation photos to [friends@nrahq.org](mailto:friends@nrahq.org)! Help us celebrate our 25th Anniversary with more memories and milestones.



Falls of the Ohio accepts the Committee of the Year award with Redpoint Resolutions VPTom Bochowski from Volunteer of the Year sponsor Ripcord

# SHOT



# The Largest Junior Rifle Program in the Smallest State in the Union

By Jon Hirons

*Smithfield Sportsman's Club President and Junior Rifle Program Co-Chair, Rhode Island Friends of NRA Chairman*

The Smithfield Sportsman's Club (SSC), located minutes outside Rhode Island's capital city of Providence, is one of the oldest gun clubs in the state. Founded in 1917, the club is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, along with the continuing success of its much younger Junior Rifle Program. In just 15 years, that program has grown to the largest of its kind in The Ocean State.

The SSC Junior Rifle Program introduces boys and girls to the shooting sports with an emphasis on safety, sportsmanship and continuous education. Open to all local youth regardless of whether their parents are members of the club, it uses the Winchester NRA Marksmanship program as the basis of instruction and training.

For 26 weeks each fall through spring, dozens of young shooters gather on Friday nights to develop their skills and fuel their passion for the shooting sports. Fifty-two youth shooters participated in the most recent season, and 12 of them went on to form the club's 2017 Junior Rifle Team.

Since 2012, the team has competed against five others in the Ocean State Ju-

nior Rifle Association. However, by that time the general state of the gear in use by the Junior Rifle Program could best be described as very well used.

Although the SSC provides the program with minimal fees to support its youth shooters, those fees only cover the cost of ammunition and targets. All other gear—from rifles and shooting gloves, jackets and mats to eye and ear protection, stands, slings and more—was provided solely through donations or fundraisers held at the club.

Since learning of The NRA Foundation grant program in 2012 and receiving its first grant in 2013, SSC has been awarded grant funding by Rhode Island *Friends of NRA* each year—five grants totaling more than \$15,000. The funding has provided the Junior Rifle Program with new gear that has allowed the program to expand in size and support the competition Junior Rifle Team. Without these vital funds, the program would not be as well-equipped to welcome and instruct all of the youth who desire to participate, nor would the competition team be able to compete on the level they do.



Running a large rifle program requires a multitude of gear. The grants have met those needs of the SSC, providing more than 25 shooting jackets, about two dozen shooting gloves, over a dozen slings, three off-hand stands, 6 shooting mats, a dozen kneeling rolls, and eye and hearing protection by the case. Without these items, the program would not have been able to sustain its rapid growth. Thanks to their availability, the past eight years have seen an increase in participation from about 12 kids to the current roster of 52 boys and girls.

Missi Moroni, whose four children all participate in the program, sees the many benefits of their involvement. "As a parent, I am thrilled with the Junior Rifle Program at the Smithfield Sportsman's Club," she writes. "First and foremost, my children are learning gun safety and responsible gun use and ownership. Not only that, they also have the opportunity to be a part of a team and a special chance to learn a skill that makes them unique."

In addition to the gear used by the program for regular season activities, the grants have also provided the club with four Anschutz 1903 target rifles. The two right-handed and two left-handed target rifles have been used by members of the competition team with great success for the past few seasons. Those competition-quality rifles would have been out of reach for the club and the participants if not for the NRA Foundation funding.

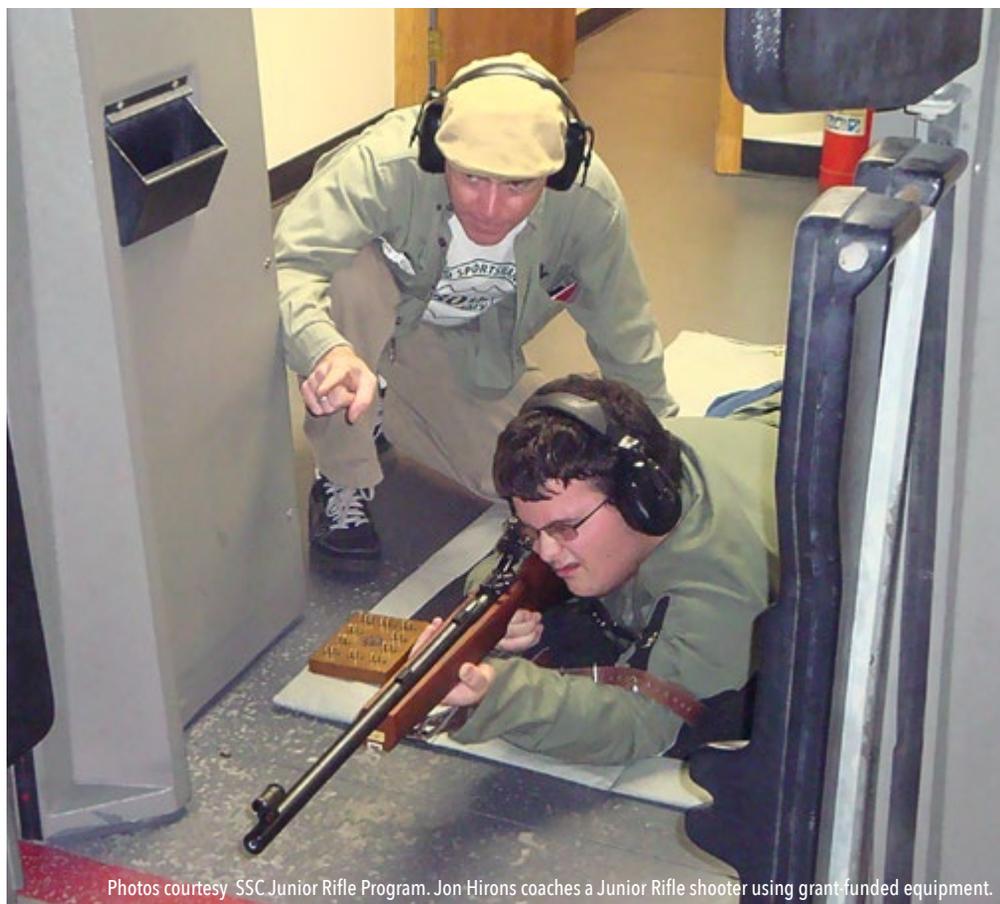
Recognizing the importance of The NRA Foundation and the impact of its grants on the future of the shooting sports, the club has stayed involved with its state's *Friends of NRA* committee since 2013. In addition to purchasing two tables and attending the annual banquet, it has also underwritten an auction item for the past three years. Several members of the club volunteer for the Rhode Island *Friends of NRA* committee, putting them in the exciting position to experience, understand and make possible the fundraising success of *Friends of NRA* and the NRA Foundation grant program it supports. ■

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*Support youth shooting sports programs like this in your area! Apply for an NRA Foundation grant at [www.nrafoundation.org](http://www.nrafoundation.org). Learn more about Friends of NRA in Rhode Island at [www.friendsofnra.org/RI](http://www.friendsofnra.org/RI).*



“ My children are learning gun safety and responsible gun use and ownership. Not only that, they also have the opportunity to be a part of a team and a special chance to learn a skill that makes them unique. ”



Photos courtesy SSC Junior Rifle Program. Jon Hiron coaches a Junior Rifle shooter using grant-funded equipment.

# RAISING THE NEXT GENERATION

## THROUGH CREATION & CONSERVATION

By PJ Weeks

*Rain Down Ministries/Refuge Hunting Camps Founder*



Photos courtesy Rain Down Ministries

**M**y vision for Rain Down Ministries began as I served as the youth leader in a church during college. While working with the youths I realized that we live in a day where we have lost the path to manhood for our boys. Once boys learned principles like responsibility, initiative, risk, and commitment by default, but they now have to be taught these things intentionally.

Firmly believing that God designed each boy to grow up to understand and live by these principles, I struggled with how I was going to teach them. I began to think about how I learned them myself. I learned from spending time with my father, following him through the woods at our hunting camp. At the hunting camp I began to learn how to be a man. I gained a sense of adventure, hard work, courage, and good decision making. I began to see the Biblical principles being taught every Sunday at church lived out.

With that realization, I knew that I wanted to recreate my experience for the next generation—to teach boys how to be men through a hunting camp based around education and experience. We wanted to be intentional about teaching these youth hunters the principles of being a Godly man while giving them the experience of a lifetime. But despite our planning and preparation, we had no idea how the first camps would go and if they would make the difference that we hoped. In no way were we ready for just how incredibly they succeeded.

After the first few years of hosting our Refuge Hunting Camps (RHC), we realized that they were the perfect classroom for teaching three important truths: creation is a gift to enjoy; creation is a responsibility to be stewarded; and all of creation points to God's grace in Christ. These truths drive what Rain Down Ministries does as an organization and fuel our mission to teach youth Biblical principles for life through creation and conservation, with RHC as the primary means of carrying out that mission.

RHC participants learn to recognize the gift we have in creation and why we love to spend time in it. They learn hard work, good decision making, making commitments and long term thinking through

practicing conservation. We teach them to have responsibility for their actions as hunters and to make good decisions as they hunt. Before they can harvest an animal, they identify it, determine its age and gender, and then make an ethical shot. Through this process we teach them to make good decisions in an excited state as well as how to be patient for the right moment.

Held from November through January, Refuge Hunting Camps host boys ages 10 to 18 and their fathers for a three-day whitetail deer hunt. If a boy doesn't have a father or a guide to attend with him, we provide one so that he can have the mentoring experience that is key to this program. The camp is designed to give fathers and sons, as well as families, time together. Participants spend time hunting, learning principles and practices of conservation, and getting to know other father and son or family groups. Adults and youths participate alongside each other, learning about conservation while putting it into practice, hunting and attempting to harvest an animal while thinking through how that fits into being stewards of creation. And although our primary focus is boys, we have found that girls love to participate in our outdoor ministry as well.

Our community has also grown to include members of law enforcement and combat veterans who both volunteer for and participate in the camps. It started with the combat veterans coming to camp as guides for the youth hunters who did not have a father and grew into them desiring to bring their children and families to camp. It is great to have them in camp to be able to share their stories and our appreciation for them with the rest of the campers. Their expertise is invaluable for sighting in rifles and instructing youth shooters. There are few things more moving than seeing a former U.S. Army Sniper laying on the ground beside a 14-year-old young man teaching him how to shoot a rifle.

Sam Caston, a U.S. Air Force veteran wounded in combat, has embraced our mission. "I have hunted my entire life," he says, "but I will never walk in the woods with the same mindset again." He now heads up a Refuge Hunting Camp program we are working on for combat veterans and their families.



From our very first RHC, we realized that many youth in our country have grown up in homes with no guns or with limited access to guns. In order to introduce our youths to guns and the shooting sports as well as teach them how to be proficient in a hunting situation, we created the Sportsman's Challenge. During the Sportsman's Challenge at RHC, the youth shooters learn three disciplines of shooting—wing shooting (skeet), precision shooting (rifle), and archery—and have the opportunity to compete as individuals and teams.

NRA Foundation grants help provide the tools we need to make these camps and activities happen. There are always kids at camp who do not have access to a hunting rifle, ammo, or other necessary gear. Grant support makes it possible for those youth hunters to go through the RHC with quality equipment to use. Additionally, it ensures that we have the best tools available for the Sportsman's Challenge to teach the youths how to handle a firearm and how to be proficient hunters as they practice conservation—skeet throwers with wobblers kits allow us to teach wing shooting in a realistic manner, and rifles help us teach proper shooting technique and shot placement of big game animals.

The feedback we receive from our participants has been wonderfully touching and motivating. After each camp, at least one father will come up to me and say that the three days they spent with their child was

the best time they have spent with them in their lives. One man in particular came to me with tears in his eyes, expressing he had not spent that type of quality time with his 14-year-old son since he was a baby. Another time, a combat veteran explained how he could not spend time with his family in public because of the issues he faces with PTSD, but he loved the camp because he could spend time with his children in an environment that wasn't stressful to him.

This past season our Refuge Hunting Camps hosted 168 youth hunters from six states. With each youth hunter's guide and our support personnel we had well over 300 people in camps. As we work to make the Sportsman's Challenge its own program available year round, we anticipate that more than 300 youth participants of our programs will use the NRA Foundation grant equipment in 2017. The impact being made through the grant program cannot be understated, and we could not do what we do without it. Every grant helps us raise up a generation that understands that creation is a gift from God to enjoy and that conservation is a responsibility to practice. ■

*Do you know of an organization that could benefit from an NRA Foundation grant? Apply at [www.nrafoundation.org](http://www.nrafoundation.org). To learn more about Friends of NRA in Mississippi go to [www.friendsofnra.org/MS](http://www.friendsofnra.org/MS).*

By Christina Paladeau  
Event Marketing & Communications Coordinator, National Rifle Association

# at a Crossroads

State mottoes may seem like a thing of the past, but Indians truly take theirs to heart. “The Crossroads of America” doesn’t just describe Indiana’s central location and the hub of major highways that pass through its capital city. It also speaks to a culture of cooperation in pursuit of greatness, a philosophy that shines particularly bright in the relationship between the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Crossroads of America Council (CAC) and the Indiana *Friends of NRA*.

Three years ago, CAC Director of Development Anna Hudak met NRA Indiana Field Representative Craig Haggard at the first event she headed after joining the Crossroads Council team. The two enthusiastic fundraisers hit it off and have been working together ever since to help both of their organizations reach new heights.

“*Friends of NRA* has a great relationship with the Boy Scouts, and my area has gotten better because of it,” Haggard

notes. “By establishing a close relationship with the Crossroads Council, volunteering for their events and them volunteering for ours—not out of obligation but just to get to know each other—it has opened so many doors for both of our organizations.”

“I’ve been with BSA since I was 14,” Hudak explains, “as camp staff in high school and college, then working for councils in Minnesota and Iowa.” While helping to create a BSA Pistol Pilot Program in Iowa, Hudak found her personal love of the shooting sports. Then, after moving to Indiana, learned the ropes of BSA fundraising, which reinforced her dedication to supporting youth shooting sports programs.

“I now run a team of people who are responsible for our fundraising,” shares Hudak, “and many of the same donors who support us go to *Friends of NRA* events.”

But the relationship between Indiana *Friends of NRA* and the CAC goes much further back than Haggard and Hudak. “They have been supporting this BSA council since long before I was here,” she notes. “We now have a really solid shooting sports committee of at least 100 NRA-trained volunteers.”

As the largest council in Indiana, the CAC operates shooting sports programs for hundreds, even thousands, of youth. Since 2001, more than \$200,000 in NRA Foundation grant funding has supported those efforts, including the Venturing and Explorer programs, which serve both boys and girls.

Among them is the Police Explorer Program, an educational experience that provides a learning opportunity for teenagers interested in the field of Law Enforcement. “Since 2006 we have had a great relationship with the NRA Foundation and their support for the education of youth in Police Exploring,” shares Officer Matt Johnson, CAC Police Explorers Program Advisor. “Together we are helping shape the future of Law Enforcement.”

Shaping a future for the shooting sports and building the next generation of Americans who will treasure and protect those traditions is at the heart of this crossroads of the two organizations.

“The NRA Foundation and *Friends of NRA* have allowed youth groups, such as the BSA, to have a resource for adult leader training, supplies, and safety equipment,” says Hudak. “It is because of programs like these that Scouting can give thousands of young people in central Indiana the opportunity to learn how to shoot safely, earn Rifle Shooting and Shotgun Shooting Merit Badges, enhance their marksmanship skills, and perhaps create a lifelong hobby or career.”

“The culture in Indiana is one that emphasizes how by working together we can accomplish great things,” Hudak continues. “The partnership that we have with Craig Haggard and his *Friends of NRA* team is no exception. We have been able to support each other’s events and activities and in the end both grow our positive impact serving youth. We are grateful and thankful for the *Friends of NRA* and NRA Foundation grant programs and look forward to many years of continued success.” ■



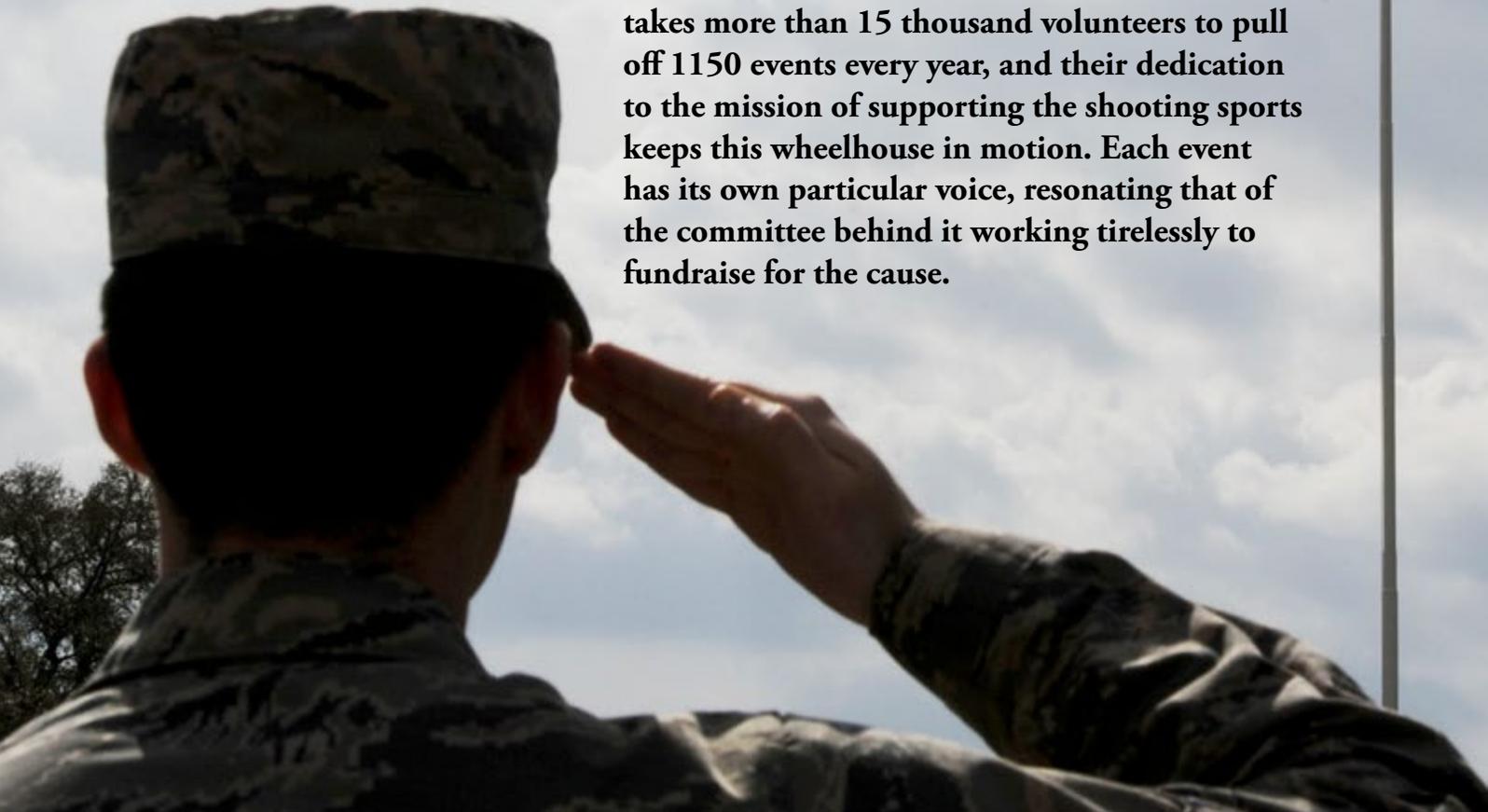
Photos courtesy BSA Crossroads of America Council

Apply for an NRA Foundation grant for your youth program at [www.nrafoundation.org/](http://www.nrafoundation.org/)  
Find a Friends of NRA event near you at [www.friendsofnra.org/Events](http://www.friendsofnra.org/Events). Learn more about  
Friends of NRA in Indiana at [www.friendsofnra.org/IN](http://www.friendsofnra.org/IN).

# Saluting It Forward

By Kristina Krawchuk  
*Event Marketing & Communications Manager,  
National Rifle Association*

Just as the shooting sports are richly steeped in tradition, so is the *Friends of NRA* program that raises money to ensure their existence. It takes more than 15 thousand volunteers to pull off 1150 events every year, and their dedication to the mission of supporting the shooting sports keeps this wheelhouse in motion. Each event has its own particular voice, resonating that of the committee behind it working tirelessly to fundraise for the cause.



This is the story of three separate committees in Arkansas whose patriotic voices started a trend that ricocheted across the state. It all started in June 2014 at the Johnson County *Friends of NRA* event in Clarksville, Ark.

Bob Whitanack served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War as a helicopter mechanic and crew chief stationed in Germany and Italy. At home in Arkansas, he instilled a love of God and Country in his children not by words but by how he lived his daily life.

Youth shooting sports sparked fresh energy for Whitanack. He encouraged local youth to set up and practice trap shooting on his farm. And you better believe he was there every day to watch them practice.

So, it's no surprise that Whitanack's hometown Johnson County *Friends of NRA* event was a big draw each year for him and his family. Not only did he attend the event and participate in raffle games, he also donated merchandise from the family-owned company to events state-wide.

This particular year, the auction lineup included a beautiful NRA pocket watch. Attendee David Henry was bidding on the watch, with his son Alex reminding him that he already had one. But Henry had a selfless purpose for that watch, and he ended up as the highest bidder.

Johnson County *Friends of NRA* had already recognized the veterans in the room, as they had done at every banquet for many years. But Henry wanted to do a little more. After winning the watch, he walked up to the microphone and started asking the age of the veterans in attendance, searching for the oldest one. That turned out to be the 82-year-old Bob Whitanack, and Henry presented him with the token of gratitude.

Whitanack's son Michael remembers his father being absolutely overwhelmed. "Dad was so excited," he said. "He told that story to everyone who he came in contact with." The following March, Whitanack was diagnosed with bone cancer. Before he passed away two months later, not a single person walked into his hospital room without hearing about his watch.

David Henry has kept alive the tradition he started in 2014. He is now the chair of Washington County *Friends of NRA* and the 2016 Volunteer of the Year

for Arkansas. Last year, a framed Second Amendment plaque became the item of choice, and Kris Martin won the auction at the Washington County event to present the plaque to World War II veteran Mr. Brooks.

Wanting to show Mr. Brooks the article printed by the local paper in honor of his service, Kris decided to pay him a visit after the banquet. The photo that she captured of him on her visit truly says it all. Mr. Brooks wears his WW II Veteran cap and a smile that touches the soul. And in the background you can see it—that Second Amendment plaque hanging right by his bed in the nursing home, a symbol of how a small act of kindness that has a big impact on others. The image is a strong reminder of how important it is to pause in life and take a moment to show our sincere gratitude for the sacrifices these veterans and their families have made to protect our freedoms.

This story comes full circle at the Arkansas River Valley *Friends of NRA* event with a bidding war between Bob Whitanack's son Michael and the committee chair, Chad Freyaldenhoven. Both men were not only raising a hand to bid, but they were also the reminder in the room that night—the reminder of the gratitude that lives in the hearts of Arkansans for the men and women who have served our country.

As the tears poured down the faces of everyone in the room, Michael smiled and graciously stepped out of the bidding war to pass the torch and give another man the opportunity to create a memory for the oldest veteran in the room. Freyaldenhoven stepped forward and presented retired state trooper and National Guard veteran Tom Gray with the Second Amendment plaque and a memory—a memory that all started with Michael's father. A memory, a pocket watch, a tradition.

The tradition continues throughout Arkansas and has rippled across the country with Friends "Saluting It Forward" to friends who served and sacrificed to defend our freedom decades ago. *Friends of NRA* salutes each and every one of you. ■

*Find a Friends of NRA event near you at [www.friendsofnra.org/Events](http://www.friendsofnra.org/Events). Learn more about Friends of NRA in Arkansas at [www.friendsofnra.org/AR](http://www.friendsofnra.org/AR). Apply for an NRA Foundation grant at [www.nrafoundation.org](http://www.nrafoundation.org).*



From top: Mr. Brooks with his plaque in the background; David Henry presents the pocket watch to Bob Whitanack; Tom Gray receives his plaque from River Valley Committee Chair Chad Freyaldenhoven

# HOME ON THE RANGE



Soon, many more Wyoming residents will truly have a home on the range—the shooting range, that is.

With a nickname like “Big Wyoming,” the nation’s lowest population, and a reputation for wide open rangeland and mountain landscapes, it may come as a surprise that finding a place to shoot there isn’t always easy. But new initiatives spearheaded by NRA Field Representative Dave Manzer and launched by the Governor last year are set to change that.

As the field representative for Wyoming, Manzer had become all too familiar with the difficulty of establishing public shooting spaces in a state where nearly half of the land is owned by the government.

“For a long time there has been a need for more access to public shooting ranges—it’s the number one thing I’ve been asked as a field rep,” Manzer says. “The land has always been our major obstacle for building ranges and providing people with safe and well-managed places to shoot, especially in small towns.”

Irresponsible use of existing shooting ranges and abuse of public lands has plagued the state in the past, and when a fire started by an incendiary target burned a large portion of a public grassland near Cheyenne in October 2015 and prompted the State Board of Land Commissioners (SBLC) to close the land to public use, the whole issue came to a head.

“The SBLC contacted me about the land being closed,” Manzer remembers, “And

that’s when I first offered my idea about taking the state land that was being used, and in some cases abused, and building ranges on it. I saw it as the perfect opportunity to both teach land ethics and give people a place to shoot.”

At the same time, the Governor’s office was encountering their own problem with range availability. As Magpul, Hiviz and other firearms industry companies moved into the state, the Governor’s office sought to organize a big pro shoot to highlight the growing shooting industry in Wyoming and promote the diversification of the Wyoming economy. But they realized they couldn’t find any ranges to host the event.

“The Governor’s office called me with their problem,” says Manzer. “And I told them, ‘This is very strange, but I’ve just been talking with state lands ... and I’d like to offer you a solution.’” With that, an idea that Manzer had had for years and shared with Wyoming Game and Fish Communications Director Renny MacKay, finally reached the table.

“I had the idea of building on state land before and talked to Renny about it, but we had no in or idea of how to make that happen,” Manzer explains. “Last year it just all fell together and basically tied in so well to the needs and goals of all these state agencies and associations as well as our growing firearms industry.”

So come May of 2016, Manzer found himself in a meeting with MacKay and the SBLC in the Governor’s office, presenting

this solution to Governor Matt Mead.

“I pitched the whole thing to him, tying it in with Game and Fish and State Lands,” Manzer says. “I told him that we’re not asking for money to build the ranges, just for the land to be turned over, because we can apply for NRA Foundation grant support. It’s a win-win all the way around. He was on board, and at that point I was kind of on a roll and also proposed the Wyoming Top 100 competition.”

Everyone quickly set to work to make these proposals a reality. When Governor Mead declared a Wyoming Day at the Range last August, he launched the Open Ranges Initiative to increase access to public shooting ranges, the Wyoming Top 100 Shooting Competition to recognize the state’s top 100 shooters, and the Magpul Governor’s Match—a national-level 2-gun (semiautomatic rifle and pistol) match to feature some of the best competitors in the country.

The first round of the Wyoming Top 100 Shooting Competition kicked off in April, with ten workshops taking place at shooting ranges around the state. Representatives from the Governor’s office, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the NRA and Wyoming’s firearms industry attended the workshops where amateur sportsmen and women came out to participate in the postal match and test their skills against one another.

Manzer sees the competition as way to reach into new communities, to highlight



By Christina Paladeau

Event Marketing & Communications Coordinator,  
National Rifle Association

Photos of Rawlins Range, credit Chris Iacovetto

the things that The NRA Foundation has done and can do to promote the shooting sports, and to build new *Friends of NRA* committees. With more than \$2 million in grant funding invested in Wyoming ranges already, The NRA Foundation and *Friends of NRA* have provided resources over the years to all ten of those that hosted workshops this year. Among them are the City of Rawlins Indoor Shooting Facility and Outdoor Shooting Complex, as well as the Thermopolis Gun Club “Bob Milek Memorial Range.”

“We have been very fortunate to have the volunteer base and the *Friends of NRA* support for this range,” notes Patti Hays, City of Rawlins Superintendent of Recreation. “Our shooting fans are increasing every year.”

The Rawlins Outdoor Range now has two skeet fields, four trap fields, a shotgun 5-stand, 10 pistol bays supporting all types of handgun competition, a 300-yard rifle range and a 1000-yard range that will soon have new electronic target systems for 10 firing lanes, all of which have been supported with construction and equipment grants from The NRA Foundation. Grants provided funding for new target carriers and control systems in the Indoor Shooting Range.

These ranges and the grant funding invested in them provide direct support to a large number of shooting sports programs, from the local Wyoming Game & Fish Hunter Education and 4-H rifle and

archery to training and qualification requirements of the local police and county Sheriff’s Department, and they have been instrumental in developing various matches from cowboy action to modern long rifle, junior rifle leagues and shotgun leagues.

Although small in size, the Thermopolis Gun Club (TGC) also supports a wide range of activities and has been steadily growing in membership. Its “Bob Milek Range” land is being developed into a functional range with NRA Foundation grant funding provided by Wyoming *Friends of NRA*. The range serves programs including Hot Springs County 4-H Shooting Sports, a “Hunt for Heroes,” and the local police department, which uses it for qualification training.

“The use of the TGC ‘Bob Milek Range’ has in no small part been augmented by the generous grants from The NRA Foundation,” says TGC’s Cynthia Garbin, who also serves as chairwoman of the Hot Springs County *Friends of NRA* committee. “The grants awarded have provided ammunition used at the local YHEC and other youth shoots. Metal Targets were used for our Tactical Rimfire Blastathon, and the excavation of our pistol pit and berm work have improved the use of the range for classes and shoots, like the Wyoming Top 100.”

Manzer looks forward to helping more ranges, new and old, benefit from NRA Foundation grants and bring more opportunities in the shooting sports to peo-

ple all over Wyoming. “It’s very exciting,” he enthuses. “We’re currently working to secure the land for our first range in the Open Ranges Initiative, and hopefully it will be the first of many. Star Valley is an incredibly beautiful place with a bunch of little towns nestled in the mountains. But there is no place to shoot; it’s all either private land, state land, or national forest. The folks in Star Valley are eager to see this project succeed, and they are putting together an organization to apply for NRA Foundation grants.”

Looking back on the past year and a half, Manzer emphasizes how *Friends of NRA* has been at the heart of all his efforts. “I’m proud of how many people were involved, and I don’t think it could have fallen together any better,” he says. “I know none of this would’ve happened without my job, my travel around the state and my knowledge of our ranges, and absolutely everything about this I did to perpetuate *Friends of NRA*. We’re starting to see the benefits for the program already, and it really helps to have the support of the Governor’s office. It’s *Friends of NRA* and The NRA Foundation grant program that are building the ranges, and the next generation is going to benefit from every bit of this. And that’s exactly the point of it all.” ■

Visit [www.nrafoundation.org](http://www.nrafoundation.org) to apply for a grant to fund ranges and programs near you! To learn more about *Friends of NRA* in Wyoming, visit [www.friendsofnra.org/WY](http://www.friendsofnra.org/WY).

# Empowering Wheels



*The crisp, chilly dawn of December 15, 1981, is one I will never forget.*

**By Emily Cotton**  
*NRA Certified Instructor,  
Guns and Ladies of San  
Luis Obispo Volunteer*

I suppose you could consider me a victim, which is defined as a person harmed, injured or killed as a result of a crime, accident, or other event or action. But I don't think of myself as a victim. I think of myself as a young woman who made some choices with a lack of life experiences.

I was a vibrant 23-year-old college student studying Political Science and working part time at UPS. With less than two weeks until Christmas, work was overflowing with holiday elves sending packages in hopes it will make it under the tree in time.

It was early morning, and I had just parked my car at work, looking forward to seeing my coworkers and hearing about their holiday plans. Nothing could be further from the reality that unfolded.

I hadn't even opened my car door, when my estranged husband stepped up and opened it for me. He tried to convince me to drive him someplace that we could "talk." But it was Christmas rush at UPS and I said I had to get in to work. I had no idea he had a gun.

He shot five times at point-blank range with a .38 revolver. Three bullets entered and exited, one missed, and one collapsed my lung and lodged in my spinal cord. I became a paraplegic instantaneously. Later that evening, he shot himself with the last bullet as he was being apprehended by the police.

I awoke the next day in ICU. My doctor bluntly told me that I'd be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. But having played sports my whole life, I was determined that a wheelchair was not going to change that. After three months of rehab, I was back in college to complete my bachelor's in political science.

Through it all, I never thought of the gun as the problem or the reason why I was in a chair. Instead I've always thought of the person who pulled the trigger—a person that I loved and who had professed to love me, too. I still can't understand why someone would want to kill someone they love and then take their own life, especially when we had our whole lives in front of us.

Like many young people, at 23 I pretty much thought I was invincible. I was always a fighter, with a creative mind and a way of figuring out a way to do whatever I wanted. I prided myself on being completely independent, but I've learned now that in truth I am interdependent on so many other people.

A few incredible spinal cord-injured athletes were some of those people. They introduced me to a new world—wheelchair basketball, track, and road racing. By 1983, I was competing nationally and internationally in track and field and began my road racing career with 10K's and marathons. I continued racing through 1993, and then began 3-event water skiing (slalom, ticks, jump) when I moved to Georgia from California. I competed nationally and represented the U.S. in the 1997 World Championship.

After moving back to California, the search was on to find a new competitive sport—something not so physical this time. I started with an NRA women's shooting event, which led me to take an NRA basic pistol course. During a visit to my local shooting range, I was asked to join a local Guns and Ladies program. I didn't have much experience or the right equipment, but it didn't matter. The spirit of that sisterhood mattered, and I was hooked.

Professionally, I have worked as an Assistive Technology Provider for more than 30 years. Seeing a new injury or meeting a young child for their first exposure to independence after an injury has been the best reward that my injury has given me. Changing someone's idea about what or how the rest of their life can be—what could be better than that? It's the same reward I get from volunteering in the shooting sports.

In my spare time, I work as an NRA pistol instructor and RSO at the Hogue Action Pistol Range at San Luis Obispo Sportsmen's Association (SLOSA), which recently received NRA Foundation grants to fund upgrades for the facility to handle wheelchairs and other adults with disabilities.

The Guns and Ladies program started about four years ago, and I've joined them as a volunteer for the past three. We introduce more than 600 women and about 35 youth to the shooting sports each

year, through several clinics held January through October. A group of about 55 volunteers and a core team of about 15 people who staff the Guns and Ladies program every month—and the staff is all women, for women.

The program is a totally empowering experience both for us as volunteers and for every woman that we teach. And that empowerment speaks for itself. With word of mouth as our only advertising, we fill our clinic each and every month within seven minutes.

This program that inspires so many women wouldn't be possible without the generous NRA Foundation grants awarded to us by *Friends of NRA* and the help of sponsors, but most of all it is our family of volunteers that proudly illustrates the love of the shooting sports.

I am so thankful to have been welcomed with open arms to the shooting community. I have been gifted equipment, classes and support from many people, including Clint and Heidi Smith of Thunder Ranch who introduced me to the world of defensive handgun and Art, Janet and Eric Leach along with the entire SLOSA organization who provide a stellar and safe place to shoot.

I also can't express my thanks enough for The NRA Foundation grant program. I've taken multiple Women On Target® seminars and volunteered as an instructor. It's a phenomenal feeling to be able to educate women about the shooting sports in a comfortable environment and help them overcome their fears to become competent and safe firearm owners.

I think when people see a woman with a disability out on a range either practicing her shooting skills or teaching other women they sometimes get a wakeup call. There is no excuse not to learn about the safe use of firearms. And it's not just about protecting yourself and your family, but also about passing on that knowledge and experience to another sister. The extra bonus? A whole lot of fun. ■

*Bring empowering NRA programs like Women On Target® and Refuse To Be A Victim® to your town. Go to [www.nrafoundation.org](http://www.nrafoundation.org) to apply for a grant. Learn more about California Friends of NRA at [www.friendsofnra.org/CA](http://www.friendsofnra.org/CA).*



*The Guns and Ladies program is a totally empowering experience both for us as volunteers and for each and every woman that we teach.*

# MAKING WAVES FOR THE SHOOTING SPORTS



By Christina Paladeau  
*Event Marketing & Communications Coordinator,  
National Rifle Association*



## DIAMONDBACK

has been making waves in the airboat industry for decades and now is growing a firearms outfit to match. Owner Bobby Fleckinger is eager to take on the challenge of guiding his multifaceted operation into the future while supporting The NRA Foundation and the American outdoors and shooting sports traditions they share.

# WAVES BOATING PORTS



Located in Cocoa, Fla., Diamondback America's operation grew out of the airboat company that Fleckinger started in November of 1989. Building on that solid foundation, Diamondback has become an extensive and broadly capable facility producing a wide variety of custom and stock items far beyond airboats, including firearms used to fundraise at *Friends of NRA* events around the country.

From manufacturing marine products, crane bodies, and just about anything made of metal, the Diamondback family of companies expanded to include Diamondback Wake Products and Diamondback CNC.

"I like challenges," says Fleckinger, who started working for an airboat company straight out of high school and proceeded to buy it soon after, jumping into entrepreneurship with the help of his mother. "I think if there weren't challenges I would lose interest, but there always are and that's why we do so many different things."

Prompted by a discussion with an airboat customer and avid alligator hunter about the shortage of modern sporting rifles options available, Diamondback Firearms was added to the company family in 2009 with the debut of a micro compact pistol.

"We were actually machining parts for other firearm companies in 2007, manufacturing uppers, sights and other parts for everybody else," Fleckinger explains. "So we decided to do it for ourselves and set out to do a pistol. It took about two years to get the first pistol out, and now we do it a lot faster."

The Diamondback line has expanded to encompass a wide range of all-American made firearms including AR-style rifles like the DB15300B available to *Friends of NRA* events through the Vendor Direct program.

Diamondback and *Friends of NRA* have been building a valuable relationship in service to America's shooting sports traditions and enthusiasts since 2012. After Diamondback Firearms became involved with *Friends of NRA* in 2013 as a Vendor Direct firearms supplier, Diamondback Airboats joined in by donating a custom airboat to the 2014 National NRA Foundation Banquet.

"We really pick and choose carefully what we donate each year and want to make sure it goes to a good cause," notes Fleckinger. "We're very motivated to work with The NRA Foundation, and everything we've done with them we've been really happy with and where the money goes. The importance to us with this partnership is the safety and education. We get credit for the boats but The NRA Foundation does the hard work behind the scenes to make sure this is around for the future of our youngsters."

Ensuring that future is a personal investment for Fleckinger. "I have a five year old son who wants to hunt and shoot and fish," he shares, "and he's going to be raised around the shooting sports and the outdoor industry in general."

This year the joint efforts to support those legacies continued with Diamondback's donation of another custom airboat, which was auctioned off and brought the combined total raised by both airboats to more than \$130,000 to benefit The NRA Foundation. "We set out to create a truly unique and amazing design to embody the spirit of the NRA," Fleckinger explains. "We were immensely proud to be able to offer this airboat to a lucky bidder in a way that empowers The NRA Foundation to continue building a bright future for the shooting sports in our country."

If there is one word to describe Fleckinger's feelings towards Diamondback and the culture that he has fostered there, it would be pride. "We always look at it as building something special, whether it's a firearm, an airboat or anything else," he says. "Every person we have in that shop who puts their hands on it has pride in it. We're just proud to make stuff and keep our talented team busy. Diamondback is incredibly proud of our team of people. We are proud to be American made and proud to do what we do in the United States."

We want to thank Diamondback and its staff for all the support they provide The NRA Foundation as an American company providing an American product for use at our national and local events. Their commitment to The NRA Foundation, the National Rifle Association, and Second Amendment supporters across our great nation helps us continue our mission to Teach Freedom. ■

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# REP MPAD

## Marc Peugeot NORTHERN OHIO FRIENDS OF NRA Field Rep since November 2011

### What did you do in your previous life?

I graduated from THE Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Management. During my college years I worked for one of the oldest duck hunting clubs in the U.S., helping with marsh management of approximately 5,000 acres and guiding members on hunts during the season. After graduating I worked for the University on a joint study with the Ohio Division of Wildlife on Bobwhite Quail sustainability in the Buckeye State. This led into a position with The Ohio Division of Natural Resources as a Wildlife Specialist at Lake La Su Ann Wildlife Area.

In 2008 I moved to southwest Pennsylvania to work as an Environmental Scientist for a private engineering and environmental firm monitoring water quality, conducting biological studies, delineating wetlands for local mines and building gas drilling locations.

### Tell us something unique about you...

My wife Kristin and I run a roadside stand in the summer where we sell all sorts of goodies that we raise on our small farm. If you time it just right you can get honey, tomatoes and maple syrup—and pet our mascot Ruby the Goat—all in one stop!

### Favorite Firearm and why...

“Meat Hook,” my 12 gauge that my father Duane helped me pick out when I was about 13. I saved up for it one summer so I would have something to go hunting with. I can still remember him explaining why that shotgun would make a great firearm for me because I could hunt anything and everything in Ohio with it. He was right—I have harvested many deer and turkey, hundreds of ducks and geese, and an untold number of rabbits with that gun and my old beagle Fritz! At 32 it is still my go-to. Over the years in my circles it has become legendary for pointing like the finger of doom, earning it its nickname.

### Name 5 things you can't live without...

A crisp Ohio fall full of bow hunting whitetail deer and Buckeye's football. Ice in the winter for ice fishing walleye on Erie. My wife Kristin to keep me organized. A couple beagle dogs that have noses for rabbits. And Cheeze-its!

### How did you get involved with Friends of NRA?

I actually helped with the *Friends of NRA* event in Columbus, Ohio, when I lived there. I can still remember the first event I attended and how I couldn't get over how many guns were being given away!

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